

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-11 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 USIA-15 TRSE-00 SAM-01 SAJ-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3931

SECDEF PRIORITY

INFO USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

US INTEREST CAIRO 0025

USNMR SHAPE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 USNATO 0636

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XT, XF, NATO

SUBJECT: FRENCH BRIEFING ON JOBERT'S TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST

REF: A) USNATO 483(NOTAL); B) STATE 017688 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY AND COMMENTS: AT FEBRUARY 6 NAC FRENCH PERMREP BRIEFED THE COUNCIL ON FRENCH FORNMIN JOBERT'S JANUARY 24-29 VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT AND SYRIA. SUBSTANCE OF BRIEFING WAS, IN MISSION'S VIEW, NOT PARTICULARLY STARTLING. HIGH POINTS WERE:

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A. FRENCH DENIAL THAT A LONG TERM OIL DEAL WAS DISCUSSED IN SAUDI ARABIA;

B. FRANCE'S EAGERNESS TO HELP THE ARABS INVEST

THEIR EXCESS CASH;

C. SYRIAN VIEWS ON WHAT IS REQUIRED TO MOVE
THEM TO GENEVA;

D. SYRIAN REQUESTS FOR FRENCH ARMS.

THE BRIEFING WAS SIGNIFICANT HOWEVER IN THAT
IT REPRESENTED FIRST TIME SINCE CURRENT MIDDLE EAST
CRISIS BEGAN THAT FRANCE OR ANY OTHER NATO ALLY
HAS VOLUNTEERED IN THE NAC (ITALY PROVIDED A REPORT IN PERMREPS
LUNCH) INFORMATION ON MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, AND,
MISSION BELIEVES, THIS REPRESENTS THE FIRST CONCRETE FRENCH
RESPONSE BY DEEDS RATHER THAN WORDS TO SECRETARY
KISSINGER'S JANUARY 25 CALL FOR RECIPROCITY FROM
THE ALLIES WITH REGARD TO MIDDLE EAST INFORMATION.
(REF B). THIS DEVELOPMENT MAY REPRESENT THE
BEGINNING OF A DIALOGUE IN THE NAC ON THE MIDDLE
EAST AND IT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY THE U.S.
MISSION SUGGESTS THAT IN NEAR FUTURE U.S. MIGHT
GIVE A FURTHER MIDDLES EAST BRIEFING IN THE NAC
AND USE THAT OCCASION TO POSE QUESTIONS TO THE
FRENCH AND PERHAPS ALSO TO THE UK ABOUT THEIR
ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA. ACTION REQUESTED:
DEPARTMENT REACTION, AND, IF AFFIRMATIVE, MATERIAL
FOR FURTHER NATO MIDDLE EAST CONSULTATIONS
INCLUDING QUESTIONS TO BE PUT TO FRENCH, BRITISH, OR OTHER ALLIES.
END SUMMARY AND COMMENTS.

1. AT FEBRUARY 6 COUNCIL MEETING FRENCH PERMREP
(DE ROSE) VOLUNTEERED A REPORT ON FOREIGN MINISTER
JOBERT'S RECENT TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST. DE ROSE
SAID JOBERT PAID A VISIT FROM JANUARY 24-29 TO
THREE MIDDLE EAST STATES, SAUDI ARABIA (JAN 24-26);
KUWAIT (JAN 27-28) AND SYRIA (JAN 28-29). DE ROSE
SAID THE CONVERSATIONS JOBERT HAD ON THESE OCCAISONS
SHOWED THAT THE FRENCH POSITION AND THAT OF THE EC-9
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DURING THE COURSE OF THE RECENT CONFLICT WERE BOTH
WELL UNDERSTOOD AND FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY LEADERS
OF THOSE THREE COUNTRIES.

2. THE REPORT STATED THAT JOBERT DWELT ON NEW
PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN
THESE THREE COUNTRIES AND EUROPE. WITHOUT GOING
INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF ENERGY PROBLEMS, JOBERT
REPEATEDLY DID COMMENT ON FRENCH PREOCCUPATION
WITH THE EXCESSIVE INCREASES IN PETROLEUM PRICES.

3. IN JIDDA, THE REPORT CONTINUED, JOBERT'S
CONVERSATIONS WITH THE KING WERE INSPIRED BY THE SAME

SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WHICH HAD ANIMATED THE OFFICIAL VISIT OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN SOVEREIGN TO PARIS IN MAY 1973. DURING THIS FIRST OF THREE STOPS THERE WAS LITTLE DISCUSSION OF MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL QUESTIONS WITH ATTENTION DIRECTED TO THE NEED TO EMPHASIZE EFFORTS ON THE PART OF THE TWO COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP THEIR COMMON INTERESTS IN ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL FIELDS. IT WAS AGREED TO SET UP A MIXED COMMISSION WHICH WOULD HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROMOTING COOPERATION, ESPECIALLY IN CREATING AND FOLLOWING UP ON PROJECTS THAT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF SAUDI ARABIA AND WHICH WOULD FACILITATE INVESTMENT OF PART OF THE RESOURCES OF THAT COUNTRY IN FRANCE AND IN THIRD WORLD DEVELOPING NATIONS.

4. THE REPORT SAID THAT, CONTRARY TO WHAT SOME NEWSPAPERS HAD PRINTED, THE SUBJECT OF A LONG-TERM PETROLEUM AND INDUSTRIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WAS NOT EXAMINED. THAT WAS NOT THE PURPOSE OF JOBERT'S TRIP. RATHER, JOBERT REPORTEDLY WENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST TO RESPOND TO THE INVITATION OF HIS SAUDI ARABIAN COLLEAGUE AND TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION.

5. AT KUWAIT, THE NAC WAS TOLD, JOBERT'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE EMIR, PRIME MINISTER JABER, AND THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE, FINANCE, AND PETROLEUM
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CONCERNED MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF FRANCE'S RELATIONS WITH THE MIDDLE EAST AS WELL AS, A) FRANCE'S VIEW OF THE ROLE OF EUROPE OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT; B) THE AMERICAN PROPOSAL FOR THE FEBRUARY 11 CONFERENCE OF PRINCIPAL ENERGY CONSUMERS; C) THE EUROPEO-ARAB DIALOGUE; AND, D) KUWAITAIN VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR PETROLEUM PRODUCTION AND ON THE USE TO WHICH THEY MIGHT PUT THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES. THE TERRITORY OF KUWAIT BEING VERY SMALL THE POSSIBILITIES OF USING THEIR RESOURCES AT HOME IS VERY LIMITED, THE REPORT EXPLAINED. MR. JOBERT PARTICULARLY NOTED THE INTEREST THE KUWAITAINS HAD IN CREATING A MIXED COMPANY TO INVEST IN THE RESEARCH AND PROMOTION OF OTHER SOURCES OF ENERGY IN SUCH A WAY AS TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE AND TO JUSTIFY MAINTAINING A HIGH RATE OF EXTRACTION FROM THE SOIL OF A WEALTH THAT DOES NOT REPLACE ITSELF.

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6. THE REPORT WENT ON TO SAY THAT IN SYRIA THE TALKS OF THE MINISTERS, AS HAD BEEN FORESEEN, HAD MORE OF A POLITICAL CONTENT, AND CONCERNED DIRECTLY THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AND THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE. MR. KHADDAM, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED TO JOBERT IN STRONG AND CLEAR TERMS THE REASONS FOR SYRIA'S ABSTENTION FROM THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. SYRIA HAD SUBMITTED WITH REGRET TO THE OCTOBER 22 CEASE FIRE IMPOSED BY THE TWO BIG POWERS AND ACCEPTED BY EGYPT. SYRIA ONLY AGREED TO UN RESOLUTION 338 AFTER ASSURANCES GIVEN BY MOSCOW TO DAMACSUS AND WASHINGTON TO CAIRO
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AS TO THE FURTHER COURSE OF EVENTS, THAT IS THE WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL LANDS OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND SETTLEMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF THOSE PEOPLE. THE LACK OF ASSURANCE THAT THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE UN WOULD BE APPLIED AND THE PUSHING ASIDE OF THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTED TO THE GREAT RESERVE SHOWN UP TO NOW BY SYRIA WITH REGARD TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.

7. SYRIA, THE REPORT SAID, CANNOT FORESEE GIVING UP AN INCH OF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY ANY MORE THAN IT COULD LET THE PALESTIAN QUESTION GO UNRESOLVED. MR. KISSINGER HAD BEEN ASKED TO OBTAIN FROM ISRAEL A CALENDAR FOR THE WITHDRAWAL AS THIS WAS FOR DAMASCUS A PRE-CONDITION TO DISENGAGEMENT OF FORCES. THE RESPONSE IS AWAITED. THE ARAB WORLD WILL NOT LET THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM GET BOGGED DOWN AGAIN. PRESS ACCOUNTS FROM ALL ARAB COUNTRIES AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT SHOWED TO MR. SADAT THAT, EVEN IF HE WAS TEMPTED TO DO SO, HE COULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO HAVE EITHER A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT OR AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT ON THE CANAL. EGYPT COULD NOT ISOLATE HERSELF.

8. AS FOR THE PALESTINIANS THE PLO IS THE ONLY ORGANIZATION THAT HAS THE RIGHT TO REPRESENT THEM AND THAT ORGANIZATION CERTAINLY WILL NOT GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT SYRIA. THIS AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PLO AND DAMASCUS IS IRONCLAD.

9. THE REPORT WENT ON TO SAY THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD, WHO RECEIVED JOBERT IN THE PRESENCE OF KHADDAM, DEFENDED THE SAME POINT OF VIEW ALTHOUGH IN TERMS A BIT MORE NUANCE. HE SEEKS TO ACQUIRE FOR HIMSELF A LARGER AREA OF MANEUVER WITH REGARD TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, GIVEN THE STRUCTURES OF DELICATE INTERNAL POLITICS.

10. DE ROSE CONTINUED WITH WHAT WAS PROBABLY AN INDIRECT QUOTATION OF JOBERT'S SAYING: ONE COULD DISCERN IN DAMASCUS, REGARDLESS OF WITH WHOM ONE
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WAS TALKING THE VIEW THAT THE RECENT WAR HAS CHANGED THINGS IN ISRAEL AND CONSEQUENTLY AN EVOLUTION IS IN PROGRESS. JOBERT, WHILE ASKING MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT SYRIAN VIEWS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, REMARKED TO HIS INTELOCUTORS THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH RESERVE FRANCE HAS HAD ABOUT THE PROCEDURE WHICH WAS SET INTO MOTION ON OCTOBER 22, FRANCE THINKS THAT PUBLIC OPINION IN ISRAEL IS RE-EXAMINING ITSELF AND PUBLIC OPINION IN THE U.S. IS EVOLVING; AND EVEN KISSINGER, PERHAPS, MIGHT BE DISPOSED TOWARD ARGUMENTS THAT HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DISPOSED TOWARD A FEW MONTHS AGO. IT WAS WELL THEREFORE NOT TO OVERLOOK THE VIRTUE OF OPERATIONS IN PROCESS WHICH MIGHT BRING ABOUT NEW OR DIFFERENT CONDITIONS FOR A SETTLEMENT.

11. THE REPORT CONCLUDED SAYING THAT THE SYRIANS,

WITH CONSIDERABLE INSISTENCY BROUGHT UP THE QUESTION OF THE ARMS EMBARGO, EMPHASIZING THEIR DESIRE TO BALANCE THE SOVIET OMNIPRESENCE. MOREOVER, THEY INDICATED THAT MOSCOW HAS NOT ENTIRELY RECONSTITUTED THE SYRIAN MILITARY POTENTIAL WHICH EXISTED BEFORE OCTOBER 6. JOBERT REPORTEDLY TOOK NOTE OF THESE REQUESTS BUT HE REPEATED THE FRENCH POSITION WHICH HE SAID WAS STILL JUSTIFIED BECAUSE OF THE INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS IN MILITARY DISENGAGEMENT.

12. BELGIAN AND DUTCH PERMREPS AND SYG LUNS THANKED DE ROSE FOR THE REPORT AND DUTCH AMBASSADOR SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT DESPITE THE FAVORABLE ARAB ATTITUDE TOWARD THE EC-9 MIDDLE EAST EACH POSITION THEYNEVERTHELESS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE NINE.
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